

Stacy's Album

Heaven Sought and Found



Glady's Olson 6
Gotten as a
premium from
the Sunday School
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Children's home.

Xmas 1925

Dec. 27



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*"Oh, Mrs. Newman," cried
the maid, "it's two small chil-
dren half-dead with cold."*

HEAVEN SOUGHT AND FOUND

By
AGNES VOLLMAR



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I.

HEAVEN SOUGHT.

SO GREAT was the stillness reigning in the little room that the ticking of the clock on the wall could be heard with startling clearness. The evening sun peeped in through the open window with an air of friendly curiosity, its lingering gaze moving slowly from one object to another in the small chamber. Though the room itself was plainly furnished, it presented an appearance of neatness and comfort which we commonly describe by the term "cozy." Blue paper covered the walls hung with several pictures in gilt frames, among which one representing the Christ especially attracted attention because of the look of unutterable kindness and love that beamed from the eyes. White furniture was sparingly distributed throughout the room, one corner of which was occu-

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pied by a bed with snow-white hangings. Over all rested an air of quiet peace and refinement. Presently, however, the peaceful stillness of the room was broken by a hacking cough coming from the occupant of the bed of spotless white, and when the fit of coughing was over, a voice called weakly: "Marie, come to Mama, Marie."

"Shall I go and call her?" asked the maid, sitting at the foot of the bed busy with her sewing. "I believe Marie is in the garden."

"Please do, Caroline," the invalid replied.

A moment later Caroline returned to the room with a rosy-cheeked girl of about six years, whose features, though far from regular, now glowed with the healthful exercise in the open air from which she had been called. Her eyes of darkest blue were eloquent of strong feelings. Tenderness and love vied with sprightliness and stormy passions within her little heart. It was impossible not to love her, though it was clear to be seen that her mobile lips could pout as well as smile, and that her expressive eyes could flash with anger as well as sparkle with tender emotions.

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But just now as she drew near the bedside of her mother, love held full sway. Impulsively she darted forward and wound her arms about her mother's neck.

"Mama," she cried, "I have brought you the daintiest little bouquet of flowers, and I want you to be real pleased with them."

"Thank you, my dear; I am pleased with them — and with you," she added, pressing Marie to her heart, as if she feared that some power might intervene to separate them. Words that she could not utter hovered on the mother's lips. Folding her hands convulsively, she murmured:

"O my God, how can I tell her?"

"What is it, Mama, that you can't tell me?" anxiously asked Marie. "Only tell me what you want, and I will get it for you. Shall I fetch some water for the flowers? But won't you first hold them in your hands a little while? They are so pretty and they smell so sweet!"

Silently the mother pressed the flowers to her lips, and lay for a lingering moment with closed eyes, her breast heaving with suppressed emotions. Presently a tear followed by another and still another

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made its way between her closed eyelids and rolled down her wasted, sunken features.

"You are crying, Mama!" Marie exclaimed, hastily producing her handkerchief and wiping away the tears. "Are you displeased with me, Mama?" she added, and when her mother failed to reply, she, too, began to shed bitter tears.

"No, my darling, I'm not displeased with you. Come, lie down with me a little while. I have much to tell you."

With mingled feelings of joy and anxiety Marie snuggled down beside her mother, who passionately embraced her, then paused as if to gather strength and courage for the coming ordeal.

"My darling little Marie," Mrs. Warner began with a weak and hesitating voice. "You remember, don't you, how sad you were when I had to go far away to take care of your papa when he was sick? But that time I returned to you, though without your papa, who, as you know, went to live in heaven. Now, my child, I must again leave you to go to your papa in heaven. Just think how glad he will be when I come to him there!"

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"O Mama!" cried Marie; "won't you take me with you? Sweet Mama, please let me go along!"

"I can't take you with me, my child, for you must stay and take care of little Harry. He will have no one in all the world but you to love him and to care for him. Promise me that you will love him always, and never, never leave him."

Marie laid her plump little hand in her mother's hand, wasted to almost transparent thinness, and said soberly:

"Yes, Mama, I promise to feed and clothe Harry every day, and to do all I can for him. But, O Mama, why can't you take both of us along with you?"

"That is impossible, my child. The journey is too long and difficult," Mrs. Warner sighed, a look of dread creeping into her tired eyes, until they came to rest upon the picture of the Saviour hanging on the wall. One lingering look, and peace again filled her heart.

"But where are you going, Mama?" asked Marie.

"To heaven, I trust, by the grace of God," Mrs. Warner replied.

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"And why can't you take Harry and me with you, Mama?"

"To Heaven no one can go unless God calls him. I have heard His call, and He will soon come to take me to Himself."

A while Marie pondered these words in silence. Suddenly she asked: "Are you going to stay away *very* long, Mama?"

"Yes, my child, very, very long. Never again will I return to you."

"O Mama, are you never, never going to come back to Harry and me?" sighed Marie with a look so sad and woebegone that her mother's hard-won composure would have been lost, had she not closed her eyes to shut out the sight.

"My dear child," she said gently but firmly, "I must leave you and little Harry, nevermore to return; but I want you to come to me in heaven, and this you can do if you really want to. But now you must leave me, for my strength is gone, and I can talk no more."

Thereupon Caroline took Marie in her arms and carried her away. And well it was that she did so, for Marie burst into such a passionate flood of tears that Caro-

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line found it quite impossible to subdue her cries.

"Mama, Mama," she wailed. "Stay with us. Don't go away. Take Harry and me with you!" So she cried over and over again, and would not be comforted until at last she had cried herself to sleep in Caroline's lap. After having laid the sleeping child in her little bed, the maid hurried back to the sick room, where she answered the unspoken question in the mother's eyes by saying:

"Marie is asleep."

When Marie and Harry awoke next morning, they were poor and destitute indeed, for they no longer had a mother. God had sent His angels during the night to bear the weary pilgrim to His home above. She had made no further inquiries regarding the children, but had seemed to be sleeping so quietly that Caroline left the room for a moment to attend to some duty. When she returned, the poor sick woman had found rest at last—rest in her Heavenly Father's arms.

The children did not see their mother again. Fearing a new outburst from Marie, Caroline thought it best to send them

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to the wife of a farmer in the village nearby, promising to come for them in the evening. All day Marie kept asking anxious questions about her mother, but Harry promptly forgot his troubles in the enjoyment of the apples and berries with which he was plied.

When the children returned home that evening, Caroline told them that their mother had gone to heaven. Marie hastened to the well-known room where she had so often seen her mother lying. But to-day the bed was empty. She eagerly searched the other rooms of the house, but nowhere did she find her mother. In one of the rooms stood a long black coffin, but it did not occur to her to search for her mother there. Vainly she called for the one she loved so well, and when there was no response she began to weep bitterly. But filled with grief as she was, she did not for a moment forget to take Harry with her wherever she went. The brother could not understand why Marie cried, but he mingled his tears with hers, and in an effort to comfort her he kept repeating Caroline's words: "Mama has gone to heaven."

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Mrs. Warner had been living in the small cottage on the outskirts of the village for the last six months. Its sheltered location in a valley made it suitable for one suffering from lung trouble as she did. Her husband was absent on a long journey, but would return for her and the other children when the business which had taken him away was finished. This and other information she had given Caroline whom she had engaged to help in the care of herself and the children. She was hardly settled in her new home, however, before she was summoned to the bedside of her husband, who had fallen sick in a distant city. Without considering her own precarious state of health, she left her children in Caroline's care and hastened to the city where her husband lay sick in the midst of strangers. There she for weeks lavished her love and her strength in the care of her husband. But all in vain. Heartbroken, she followed the mortal remains of the father of her children to his last resting place in the grave.

With health and strength sadly impaired, she returned to her dear ones in Pleasant Valley. She had no other rela-

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tive than a cousin in England, to whom she wrote informing her of her own approaching end, and beseeching her to take charge of her little ones when she would no longer be with them. Eagerly she waited for a reply or for the coming of her cousin. But death intervened before her hopes were realized—or failed her utterly. Perhaps, in that better world on high she could see with clearer vision the future destiny of her beloved children.

After the funeral a farmer's wife promised to take charge of the little orphans, hoping, no doubt, that she would be amply rewarded when the relative in England should come to relieve her of her task. The sale of their few belongings brought little more than the amount required to pay the expenses of their mother's last illness and funeral. Marie and Harry were therefore quite destitute and altogether dependent on the charity of others. No one in the village knew from where they had come, nor the address of their English cousin, but it was taken for granted that the latter would soon appear to take charge of the little ones.

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As for the children, they gave little thought to their unknown relative. They had never seen her, and felt no longing for her coming. But Marie's heart pined more and more for the mother whose inseparable companion she had been. This yearning for mother was intensified by the black looks and harsh words of the woman in whose care they were. When the English relative failed to come, her hopes of ample reward began to wane, and in their stead arose the fear that she would have to keep the children for good, and without any hope of recompense. As she had never had any children of her own, these little strangers and all the trouble they caused her daily grew more burdensome to her.

How sadly changed life was to Harry and Marie! Formerly gentle hands had lifted them from their beds and clothed and fed them. Now they lay neglected and friendless in their cold attic chamber. When Harry began to whimper for food, Marie would get up and with stiff, unpractised fingers dress herself and him. Thereupon they would creep down into the kitchen, and rejoice if the hired girl had remembered to keep a bowl of mush

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and milk warm for them. If the farmer's wife caught sight of them, she scolded because they had slept so long; or some other day she grew impatient because they were always under foot. Why didn't they stay in bed where they would be out of the way? Rarely did they hear a kind word. All day long they would sit huddled up in a corner of the living room; for as autumn had come, they could no longer amuse themselves for want of proper clothing, which the farmer's wife refused to supply without some guaranty of repayment.

Often various household duties were set before the children, which occupied them for hours at a time, and which, especially to Marie, grew so irksome that she stormily rebelled only to be severely punished for her rebellion, and assigned tasks still more displeasing and burdensome.

"O, if we were only with Mama, our own dear Mama! O Mama, why did you leave us with this wicked woman? Why didn't you take us with you to heaven?" So Marie wailed with streaming eyes, and Harry mingled his tears as well as his cries with those of his sister.

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Often Marie would stand for hours at the window looking up into the sky. The late autumn clouds hung so low that to the little girl, lost in childish fancies, heaven seemed to be very near indeed.

One day Marie and Harry escaped the vigilance of their elders and hastened off to a high hill at some distance from the farmhouse. From the hilltop Marie had a wide and glorious view of earth and sky. But the scurrying clouds especially attracted her attention. Had she but known them, her feelings would have found expression in the words of the poet:

“Scurrying clouds,
Speeding along your pathway so bright,
Carry me with you to mansions of light!”

To Marie the clouds seemed so near at hand. And just behind the clouds heaven peeped forth, where her Mama was. Perhaps if she looked closely, she could catch a glimpse of her! So Marie's eyes followed the clouds until they disappeared behind the distant forest where heaven itself curved down to earth. Her eyes grew big with wonder at the sight. Yes, there could be no doubt that heaven and earth met there behind the forest.

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Just then one of the farmhands passed by, and Marie called to him eagerly :

“Jack, O Jack, do you think that by going through the forest we could find a place where we could step right into heaven?”

A sly look came into Jack's eyes as he replied: “I shouldn't wonder if you could. It's worth while trying anyway.”

But just then Harry began to whimper because he was cold, so Marie grasped his hand and hurried off to the warm though unfriendly shelter of the farmhouse, dismissing for the moment the startling plan that was slowly taking shape in the little head.

That day Marie paid no heed to unfriendly looks and harsh words. She did not even resent being sent to bed early, for in the darkness of her room she could lie and muse upon the place beyond the forest where earth and heaven met, and where, no doubt, her own dear mother had entered in.

“Harry dear, don't you ever think of Mama any more?” she whispered to her brother lying beside her.

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"Yes I do," Harry replied stoutly. "I dream of her every night after I go to sleep."

* * *

As the season advanced, it grew colder and colder out-of-doors, and colder likewise in the house where Marie and Harry had found shelter, but not a home. The more all hopes of reward from the rich English relative waned, the less grew the care and attention paid to the poor little orphans. The more it became apparent to the farmwife that the children would become a permanent burden to her, the greater grew her unkindliness and ill will toward them.

Time passed, and Christmas Eve had come again to bring joy and gladness to the hearts of old and young alike. Marie had only the faintest recollection of former Christmas Eves. The one the year before had been a sad one indeed, for then her father was already dead and her mother's heart so full of grief that not even the Christmas tree with its sparkling candles could dispell the gloom.

But to-day Marie observed that all were filled with eager expectancy, and busy

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with mysterious preparations for the coming Christmas festivities. Out-of-doors all things were set in order; indoors mingled odors of cooking and baking set Marie's mouth to water, as she stood looking out through the window where she could see farmer's wives returning heavily laden with good things from the village, and children with their heads together, as if asking one another what the Christ Child had in store for them.

But in all these joyous anticipations Marie had no share. No one cared for her and Harry. No special preparations had been made for their happiness. As the farmwife had no children of her own, she had given no thought to the needs and happiness of her unwelcome charges. Such Christmas preparations as she had grudgingly made were to satisfy the demands and expectations of her servants. Therefore, as the day advanced, she grew increasingly irritable, sending the children scurrying with fear from one room to another, and repeatedly expressing the wish that there were no such thing as Christmas, and that she for one could very well get along without it.

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A neighbor woman, who came on an errand, smiled kindly upon Harry and asked him: "What do you think the Christ Child will have for you to-day, my little man?"

Harry pondered a moment, but could find no answer. He asked Marie, but she was no wiser than himself. It did not occur to them to ask the Christ Child for Christmas cheer and happiness. Their mother, it is true, had taught them to say their little prayers, but that was long ago, and since their mother's death no one had told them of a Saviour who loved them, and who would hear and answer their every prayer.

"What will the Christ child bring me to-day?" he eagerly asked the mistress of the house who at that moment entered the kitchen.

"What will He bring you? A big stick, you little good-for-nothing. Isn't it enough that I slave myself to death for other people's brats, feeding and housing them as if they were my own? And all the thanks I get is that they come to me demanding Christmas presents! Go to your rich English relative for your presents. I

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wish to goodness that I had never set eyes on such little beggars. It would have pleased other folks best if your mother had taken you with her out of this life. See that you get out of my home as soon as possible, or I will chase you out with a stick."

The angry mistress slammed the door as she flung out of the room. The poor little children were left alone, Harry's eyes large with fright. Anger and defiance were depicted in Marie's countenance as she grasped Harry's hand and said:

"Come, Harry; let us get out of here, or she will beat us."

"Yes, let's go," quavered the little one.

"We'll go to Mama," added Marie.

"Yes, yes, to Mama," repeated Harry.

"But then you'll have to run as fast as you can," warned Marie. "Mama is in heaven, but I know the way there." Leading him to the window, she added: "Do you think you can run as far as the forest over there? Heaven comes right down to earth behind the forest, and when we get there we can step right in to Mama. I can't stand it here any longer.

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"I can run awful fast," Harry declared stoutly.

"Come then. We will put on all the clothes we have, and go out the back way through the orchard so that no one sees us. But let us hurry, Harry, so that we get there before dark."

So the children crept up to their attic room and donned what clothing they had. Then they stole out the back way and made straight for the forest boldly outlined against the horizon. At first all went well. Triumph over their escape from the wicked farmwife conquered what fears they might have entertained, and their first spurt of speed carried them far on their way toward the forest. But presently Harry began to complain that he was hungry. Marie was glad that she had taken a couple of apples for the journey. By this time they had reached the highway, so she threw an apple as far as she could along the road and cried:

"Run and get it, Harry, and you can have it."

Harry eagerly ran and picked it up, and while he ate it they made further progress along their way. But the little lad

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was still hungry, so Marie threw the second apple, and as a result still further progress was made.

By this time, however, both were beginning to suffer from the cold. Harry suddenly stopped in his tracks, declaring tearfully that he couldn't go any farther.

Marie wiped away his tears, and said soothingly: "Don't cry, Harry. We will soon be in heaven now."

Looking ahead, Marie could see that the forest really was much nearer now, but it was growing so dark that she could scarcely catch a glimpse of the sky. At this point the highway made a sharp turn, but a by-path led straight for the forest, and along this Marie urged Harry's lagging steps, cheering him with the prospects of soon being with their mother in heaven. But deeper grew the darkness, and more insistent Harry's complaints of hunger, weariness, and cold. Even Marie had almost reached the limit of her strength, but of this she dared to make no mention, as she must try her best to keep her brother's courage up.

"No, Harry," she urged. "You mustn't sit down. If you do, it will be dark as

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night before we get to Mama in heaven. Be a good, brave boy, and I will tell Mama what a little man you are."

Her own courage, however, was failing fast, for by this time night had set in, and neither sky nor forest was to be seen. Now and then she heard the ringing of distant church bells calling worshipers to vesper service, where they would sing in honor of the Christ child:

"Through Thee, sweet child, the gates unfold

Of heaven's paradise.

My wond'ring eyes e'en now behold

My home beyond the skies."

But the poor little waifs, lost in the darkness, had no knowledge of all this. They firmly believed that the gates of heaven stood open for them, but their knowledge of Him who had opened these gates was dim indeed. But He knew them, and was guiding their tottering steps to heaven, though not along the way they had planned.

Weeping, wearied, and cold, the little wanderers now stood seemingly unable to make further progress. In her heart Marie wondered if it had not been better for

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them to remain with the wicked farmwife where they at least had a roof over their heads. Not a single star was visible in the cloud-covered sky. But as she looked again, a star — or was it a light — did pierce the darkness, and seemed to beckon them.

“Look, Harry,” cried Marie. “Don’t you see the light? Come, let us run. It isn’t far off. O, if I could only carry you!”

Urging and dragging Harry onward, Marie put forth her last ounce of strength to reach the light that beckoned them. Fortunately the way was not long, and they soon stood before a small cottage from whose window the light had sent its welcoming greeting to them. While they stood hesitating before the door, a dog began to bark fiercely. This so terrified Harry that he began to cry at the top of his voice. A door flew open, and a woman’s voice called out: “Who comes there?”

“O, Mrs. Newman,” cried the maid; “it is two small children half dead with cold.”

“Bring them in at once,” Mrs. Newman urged, and when they had been brought to her she put her arms lovingly around them.

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How bright and dazzling the room was! The children blinked and stared and blinked again before their wondering eyes became accustomed to the light. In the center of the room stood a Christmas tree with many lighted candles. White angels with golden wings hovered among its branches. Heavenly music filled the room, issuing from a reed organ played by a middle aged man surrounded by several rosy-cheeked children who sang with full voice:

“Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love’s pure light,
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.”

Trembling with supreme joy, the children stood rooted to the spot, Harry with eyes and mouth wide open, and Marie with folded hands. Was this really heaven? Surely, heaven could not be more beautiful than this! How kind and good the nice lady looked! How friendly all the others seemed!

When the song was ended Dr. Newman—for that was the gentleman’s name—turned to the children and asked:

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"Who are you, little ones, and what are you looking for?"

"We are looking for heaven," Marie stammered. "We have come so far to find it. This must be heaven, isn't it?" she added anxiously.

"Would to God that it were!" murmured Dr. Newman, as his wife drew the children to her side, and began to remove their poor thin wraps.

"Come now, little ones," she said. "First of all you must have plenty of warm tea, and bread and butter, and cookies; and then you must tell me all about your long journey."

So she plied them abundantly with food. Harry entertained never a doubt that he had come to heaven at last, but Marie was not so certain, for look as she would, she could catch no glimpse of her mother. Finally she asked timidly if her mama wasn't there.

"Tell me about your mama," urged Mrs. Newman, taking the little girl into her lap.

So Marie told about how her mother had gone to heaven, and had said that she and Harry might follow her there. She

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also told about the wicked farmwife who had chased them away, so that there was nothing for them to do but to set out for heaven at once. But heaven was farther away than they expected, so they had grown cold and tired, and had almost given up all hopes of reaching heaven when they saw the light shining through the darkness.

"And now we are in heaven, aren't we?" she concluded. "But where is mama?"

Deeply touched by Marie's artless story, Mrs. Newman pressed her to her breast, saying gently:

"God will give you a mama, my dear. But now we must put you to bed. See, your little brother is already asleep."

Gladly the children permitted themselves to be put to bed, the kind lady herself undressing them and kissing them good night. Both occupied the same bed, for Marie would not be separated from Harry.

Before leaving them, Mrs. Newman stooped down and whispered: "You have sought heaven, and by the grace of God you shall find it. The good God has prom-

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ised that those who seek Him early shall find Him, and of such is the kingdom of heaven."

There they now lay warm and cozy in their little bed, while from the next room the sound of heavenly music softly reached their ears, and visions of bright angels hovered before their closed eyes. Surely, this was heaven, and heavenly visions lingered with them in their dreams throughout the night.

Late that night Dr. and Mrs. Newman sat engaged in earnest conversation. The Christmas candles were extinguished, their own children had trooped off to bed, and now husband and wife were discussing what was to be done with the little waifs that had come so unexpectedly to their home.

"I know who they are now," said Dr. Newman. "They are the children of Mrs. Warner who came to live in the cottage in Pleasant Valley, where she died within a short time. My colleague in Pleasant Valley visited her a few times, and told me about her. After her death the children came to the home of Mother Sarah, the meanest and stingiest woman in the

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district. Poor little children—I wonder if they have any relatives.”

“It doesn’t look like it,” remarked Mrs. Newman. “No one seems to have taken any interest in them. But isn’t it strange that they should find their way to us, and that, too, on Christmas Eve?”

“Indeed it is,” her husband answered. “And to think that they were seeking heaven—a rather uncommon thing in our day. How fortunate that the lights from our Christmas tree led the little waifs to us! Had they not seen it, they would surely have frozen to death this night.”

“I wonder if they really believe that they are in heaven,” mused Mrs. Newman. “The contrast between the cold and darkness outside, and the warmth and light in here might well confirm them in such a belief. But, my dear, what are we to do with them now? Have we the heart to thrust them out into the cold world again, or shall we keep them and train them for the heaven they were seeking?”

Tears filled her eyes as she looked pleadingly at her husband.

“What do you mean?” he cried. “Are

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you thinking of keeping the children—both of them—and for good?”

“Yes, Fredrick, that’s what I mean. The Lord Jesus this day became a poor little child for us, and what would we be now without Him? And now on Christmas Eve itself He sends us two poor children who are seeking heaven. They have neither father nor mother, nor any one else in all the world to care for them—O Fredrick, I would never know a moment of peace again if we thrust them away from us!”

“But my dear wife,” expostulated Dr. Newman gently. “Have you considered what it will cost to make this sudden addition to our family? We are far from rich. Our own children are growing up, and will cost us more and more for every day.”

“The Christ child became poor for our sakes, Fredrick; should we not then be willing to become a little poorer for His sake? I have often thought about how little we really sacrifice for God. If we had fewer dinner parties and cut out some of the luxuries that we now permit ourselves to enjoy, the saving would more

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than keep Marie and Harry. If you let me keep them, Fredrick, I promise that you will scarcely feel the difference in the upkeep of our household."

Thus she pleaded, not realizing that in his heart her husband's views coincided largely with her own, though he felt in duty bound to consider the question from both points of view.

"In God's name, then," he said earnestly, "let us make the venture. If we are called upon to sacrifice something for Christ's sake, we can at least surrender some of the comforts and luxuries of life.

"Have no fear, my dear, of any real hardships," Mrs. Newman declared. "We will not have to buy any new clothing for some time, as I will make over some old dresses and clothing laid aside or outgrown, but having perfectly good cloth. It won't hurt me to get up a little earlier in the morning. Don't smile at me. I'll show you how diligent I can be."

"Now, my dear, let me do a little of the sacrificing," cried Dr. Newman bantering-ly. "From this day I swear off smoking. O, you needn't smile! I realize it will be a hard task. But think how much my

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tobacco bill amounts to in the course of a year. If we keep the children, we must bring them up as our own. Harry seems to be a sensible lad, and I think that I can make something out of him."

"Above all," added his wife, "we must help them to find what they were looking for, namely, heaven. Poor dears, they are in sore need of some one to lead them along the way of life and to teach them to know and love their Saviour. That shall be our chief task, shall it not, my dear?"

"So be it," the doctor declared. "Let us call down the blessing of God upon our endeavors."

So in the stillness of the night husband and wife knelt side by side and committed themselves and their dear ones, including Marie and Harry, to the loving care and keeping of their Heavenly Father; and in their hearts they felt that their concluding "Amen" was re-echoed in heaven.

Just as the midnight hour struck, the doctor and his wife stood beside the little bed containing their new-found children, and again they renewed their vow to be father and mother to them until it should

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please their Heavenly Father to take them to Himself in His home above.

Then stooping, they kissed the brows of their sleeping foster children, feeling in their hearts that never had there been a Christmas Day with greater joy and happiness.

"Never was there a more joyous Christmas than this!" Mrs. Newman declared. "It is just as if we were actually entertaining the Christ child in our home."

"And in our hearts," added Dr. Newman softly. Then hand in hand they returned to the living room; the doctor took his place at the organ, and softly through the stillness of the night their inmost feelings found expression in the following Christmas psalm:

"This day with joyful hearts we come
Our meed of praise to render
To Him who came from heaven's home
An infant Child most tender.
He came by night, poor, lowly, mild,
That heav'nborn, earthborn gracious Child.
God saw our need, and sent His Son,
Through whom salvation now is won.

My heart's desire, my hope's sole claim,
My joy, my greatest treasure!

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What worthy tribute can I name,
Of gratitude what measure?
O, what of thee I have and own
I render back to Thee alone.
Thee will I serve, Thine own to be
In life and through eternity.

Not yet Thy glory can I see;
I bide with eager yearning
Thy second coming, when to me
And all Thy saints returning
Thou wilt reveal Thy majesty,
Thy saving grace, Thy mercy free,
Grant that my life may magnify
Thee here on earth, in heav'n on high!"

II.

HEAVEN FOUND.

TWENTY-FOUR years have passed. Some ten miles from Pleasant Valley lies the little village of Sarmis, on the outskirts of which stands a neat looking house with green blinds that in summer vie in color with the surrounding trees. But to-day the blinds have no rivals in greenness, for winter has come, and the trees stand bare of leaves on this the most joyous day of all the year, Christmas Eve. As if in honor of the day, the trees have decked themselves in purest white, each branch and twig sparkling in the first rays of the rising sun. Christmas trees in every humble cottage, Christmas trees innumerable dotting the white expanse of all outdoors! O, that the most beautiful of all Christmas trees might be found in every human heart to the honor and glory of Christ our Newborn King!

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“Bid Christ the Saviour enter in!
No fancy, this, no dream; He would
Into your heart His entry win,
To see His Christmas tree, and note
If there some bird has built his nest,
And now sings carols, joyous, blest
To Jesus Christ, with yearning heart
Ne’er from the Christ-child to depart.”

But who occupy the neat cottage near Sarmis? None other than Marie and Harry Warner, the two little waifs who twenty-four years ago this day set out in search of heaven.

As we already know, Dr. Newman and his wife took them to their heart and home on an equal footing with their own children. Marie had passed through many a struggle to overcome her impulsive and passionate disposition, but never for a moment did she forget the promise she had given her dying mother to love and care for her little brother Harry. At work or at play she stood ever by his side; and when night came, their voices mingled in the prayer:

“To our bright home in heav’n above,
Lord Jesus, lead us by Thy love.”

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It was Harry's greatest delight to accompany his foster father, Dr. Newman, on his rounds. The doctor's practice carried him for many miles in all directions, and as a reward for good behaviour he would often allow one of the children to ride with him. So by degrees it came about that Harry established himself as driver on these trips, and he was very proud indeed of the honor and responsibility thus attained.

One day he had to sit and wait a long time outside of a house which the doctor had entered. Hour after hour passed, until the little coachman began to think that he was wholly forgotten. The day was cold and blustering, and Harry began to feel the pangs of hunger, but a brave lad like himself must, of course, pay no attention to so slight discomforts. Finally the doctor appeared accompanied by the man of the house, who said with trembling voice:

"Dr. Newman, next to God I have to thank you for what you have done for my children's mother this day. May God bless and prosper you!"

As if eager to escape further manifesta-

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tions of gratitude, the doctor hurriedly climbed into his buggy and ordered Harry to drive home. Not until they were well on their way did the doctor come to think of the discomfort his little coachman must have endured during his long wait.

“Harry, my poor lad,” he said, putting his arm about the boy’s shoulders, “You will have to forgive me for making you wait so long, but I really couldn’t help it, as a human life was at stake, and I had to stay until the danger was over.”

Harry’s face glowed with pride that the greatest doctor in all the world, for so the lad considered him, could lend a thought to a little boy’s discomforts after having saved a human life.

“Father,” he burst out, “I want to be a doctor, too.”

“Well, well,” Dr. Newman replied; “perhaps you think that that would be pleasanter than to sit outdoors in the cold for hours waiting for the doctor to come.”

“No, no, that’s not the reason,” stammered Harry. “I have long wanted to become a doctor; and if you will only let me study medicine, I promise to work with

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all my might until I become as good a doctor as you are."

So it came about that Harry Warner was now a doctor also. His goal was not attained without many years of hard struggle, but no one was happier than he when he was at last able to take up the practice of medicine in Sarmis some twelve miles from his old home in Pleasant Valley. Some fortunate cures in the early part of his practice won for the young doctor the general respect and confidence of the entire community. Sarmis was situated in an extensive mountain district, inhabited largely by people of small means, whom the young doctor treated with the same consideration as the wealthiest of his patients. In truth, he soon came to be known as the "Poor Doctor," because of his unfailing attention to the needs of the poor in his district. He was secretly proud of the name, and it did not seem to work any harm to his practice.

In his home we still find Marie faithful to her trust as of old. At his earnest request she had followed him to Sarmis, and it was a joy to observe the loyalty and cooperation existing between them.

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As in early childhood days, they were in search of heaven, and by the grace of God they were now confident that they were on the right way. It was therefore the earnest desire of their heart to lead others in upon the same way.

Let us venture to enter their home on this bright winter morning of Christmas Eve. Though it is still early, the people of the village are up and astir. Several farmers from the surrounding country have already found their way to Dr. Warner's house, hoping to find him at home by coming early, and eager also to get back to their own homes as soon as possible on this festive day. Patiently the doctor listened to their various tales of woe, giving advice to one and medicine to another, while from time to time he gently cautioned them:

"Don't speak so loud; please shut the door softly."

Finally it dawned on his visitors that for some reason the doctor wished them to make as little noise as possible.

"Dr. Warner," said a farmer's wife who had just come in, "I want to have a word with Miss Marie."

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"Impossible," declared the doctor. "My sister has been up most of the night taking care of one of my patients. She didn't get to bed before four o'clock this morning, and now she must sleep till nine o'clock at least."

"That's too bad," said one; "I'm sorry," said another; while a third murmured regretfully: "It would have been an added Christmas joy simply to have caught a glimpse of her kind face."

"My dear people," the doctor expostulated; "you must really help me to spare her, or I will have her as an additional patient on my hands, and you wouldn't like that, I'm sure."

"Right you are, Dr. Warner," said a robust country woman. "Miss Marie must take good care of her health. But when do you think she can come to see my poor sick man? He seems to get worse if he doesn't see her for a couple of days."

"It can't be helped," declared the doctor. "Your husband will have to wait. My sister is asleep, and I won't have her disturbed."

Just then the door flew open, and Marie herself entered with a basket on her arm.

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All eyed her with looks of astonishment; her brother could scarcely believe his own eyes, but all unconscious of the stir she had caused, she greeted all with a friendly "Good morning."

"Marie," said her brother sternly; "what have you been up to now?"

"Baking Christmas biscuits, Harry dear. Is there anything wrong in that?" she asked roguishly.

"But you should have been sleeping."

"So I did till six o'clock. Do you think that I could let you go without your Christmas biscuits?"

"Hang the biscuits!" cried her brother. "Your health is worth more to me than all the biscuits in the world."

"O, these doctors!" cried Marie merrily. "If you don't follow their directions to the letter, they do nothing but storm and rave. Look at me! Am I not the very picture of health?"

And really, as she stood facing them, she did seem the picture of youthful health and strength. She had a friendly word and an attentive ear for each and every one of them. One asked for another bowl of hot soup for his sick wife; a

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second for some more liniment for her lame back; a third wondered when Miss Marie would find time to make them another visit, etc. One and all she sent away happy and contented. Some few asked to speak with her alone, and from the kitchen in the rear a listener might have heard various voices saying:

"Dear Miss Marie, please accept this goose for your Christmas dinner."

"I've brought you a few potatoes from my little patch. I hope you can use them."

"Here is a jar of honey to tickle the appetite of some of your sick people."

"And here is a sack of dried fruit which may come in handy for the same purpose."

Though Marie was thirty years old by this time, she had not lost the gift of rejoicing as a little child. Consequently she received these gifts with sparkling eyes and many an expression of gratitude, saying repeatedly: "My brother will be happy to learn of your kindness."

When all their visitors had departed, Marie hurried to her brother's reception room to confer with him about an important matter.

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"Harry," she said; "Mother Sarah is in a bad way. The cancer is making rapid inroads, and she needs some one to care for her. Her kitchen maid left yesterday, and the other maid can't possibly tend to all the work. You'll let me run over there to-day, won't you, Harry?"

"It's entirely out of the question," Harry declared positively. "The roads are blocked with snow; there is no way to get through with either buggy or sleigh."

"I know that very well," she replied. "But I can get through on horseback all right."

"In this biting cold? Be sensible, Marie, and stay at home."

"How can I let Mother Sarah lie there helpless? Be a good boy, Harry, and let me go," she pleaded.

"Have it your own way, then," he said gruffly. Then in a milder tone he added: "God bless you, sister mine, and keep you safe."

Soon Marie was plowing her way through the snow on her faithful horse, a basket on her arm, and her eyes sparkling with the joy of living. To ride horseback was one of her chief pleasures, and

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she had become a skilled rider because of the many trips she had made to outlying homes among the mountains which it was difficult to reach except on horseback. It now required more than two hours to bring her to Mother Sarah's farmstead where she and her brother had spent so unhappy days in their early childhood. Here things have changed greatly for the worse. Sarah's husband was dead, and the farm was managed by a hired man under her supervision. But with advancing years and failing health things went from bad to worse both in- and out-of-doors. Afflicted with an incurable disease, she could only hope for a speedy death as a release from her suffering. But she dreaded to die more than she dreaded to suffer; how was she to face the day of judgment in the life to come?

Marie entered the sick-room with a smile of loving sympathy. With true Christian charity both she and her brother were constant in their effort to lend material and spiritual aid to this poor woman who had dealt so harshly with them in their childhood. A fearful odor assailed Marie when she entered the room. Doors

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and windows were flung open to obtain a change of air; the poor woman was carried to a clean bed in another room, after which Marie uncovered her basket and brought forth various delicacies to tempt the appetite of poor Mother Sarah. The latter had little or nothing to say in response to Marie's kind words, but it was easy to see that she took comfort from the gentle ministrations of her visitor.

"Don't leave me," Sarah pleaded feebly. "To-day the other maid also deserted me. She said she couldn't endure to listen to my cries of pain any longer."

"Dear Mother Sarah," Marie said gently; "I can't stay with you to-day. There are too many at home waiting for me. But it is impossible for you to remain here alone. Won't you let me take you home to our house where I can care for you every day?"

"That's what I've been wanting for some time," remarked the selfish old woman. "Here people will soon steal the very bed from under me. I have rented the farm to my hired man, William; and as soon as he takes it in charge, I will be glad to come to you."

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"That will be a splendid Christmas gift from the Christ child," exclaimed Marie happily. "I am so glad that you are willing to come to us."

A strange cause for rejoicing indeed! A greedy, fretful old woman, who had never done Marie a kindness, who was now suffering from a loathsome disease, and to whom Marie would have to surrender her own cozy little chamber — this woman was now to become an inmate of Dr. Warner's home, and the thought of it was a source of joy to Marie. How are we to explain this seeming contradiction? The explanation is not so difficult to find as it seems. With the apostle Paul Marie and Harry could say in all humility: "The Love of Christ constraineth us."

Before leaving, Marie knelt by Sarah's bed and prayed fervently that God might send the Saviour of the world as a Christmas gift to her poor sick friend, and that the peace and good will heralded by the angels of Bethlehem might find lodgment in her heart.

"You are the only one in all the world that wishes me well," sobbed Mother Sarah bitterly.

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“O no, my friend,” said Marie gently. “Jesus is a better friend than I—a friend not only willing but also abundantly able to help you, if you turn to Him and implore His aid.”

Mounted on her horse, Marie again braved the cold and snow on her homeward way. But something impelled her to turn aside and take the road she and her brother had traversed twenty-four years ago that very day. Then all was dark and forbidding; now all was bright and promising. Then her heart was filled with a vague longing for a distant heaven; now she rejoiced in the certainty that heaven was her home.

Musing on this, Marie folded her hands and softly repeated the words of the psalm:

“I lay o’erwhelmed by death’s dark hall,
When Thou becam’st my light, my all,
And faith was kindled in my soul;
Thy grace and mercy made me whole.
Thee, Saviour, will I praise and love
On earth below, in heav’n above.”

Presently Marie arrived at Dr. Newman’s home, where a cordial welcome awaited her. The old doctor and his wife,

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still sturdy and active, were surrounded by their children and grandchildren, who had come to celebrate the Christmas festivities in the old home.

"Can't you and Harry spend the evening with us?" pleaded Mrs. Newman earnestly.

"It's quite impossible, Mother dear," Marie replied. "We can't leave our sick folks, and, besides, we must make Christmas for our servants at home."

"Come to-morrow, then, as early as you can, and we will light the Christmas tree again for you."

"God willing, we will surely come then," Marie replied. "I'm happy as a child at the very thought of it."

As everyone knows, Christmas Eve is a very busy time, so Marie could not linger long. But before she went, she whispered in Mrs. Newman's ear:

"Do you remember, Mother dear, twenty-four years ago to-day?"

"Do I remember?" Mrs. Newman exclaimed. "I have never ceased to bless the day that brought you and Harry to our door."

When Marie reached home, her brother

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was away on his round of sick calls. That gave her time for the necessary preparations for the Christmas festivities of the evening. She had a large family to care for and support. In one room there were several sick children, in another several aged patients. Perhaps you would like to know how this little hospital originated?

From the very first it had been Marie's custom to visit the sick whom her brother treated, in order that she might give them what help she could. Among others thus visited was a poor seamstress without kindred or friends to aid her. Dr. Warner had sought in vain for some one to nurse her during her illness. Marie visited her often, but as the poor woman needed constant care, Marie and Harry after some deliberation decided to take her to their own home. They reasoned that as God had given them a comfortable home, they were in duty bound to make the best use of it. When this first patient had been installed, Marie declared that one hired nurse could take care of six patients as well as one; and as there was no lack of sick people who could not be properly cared for in their own homes, one after

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another were transferred to the doctor's house.

Thus the two rooms which the doctor had set aside for the purpose were soon filled. The Warners were in very moderate circumstances, depending solely upon the fees received for the doctor's professional services. But if the brother and sister often had to practice economy for their own needs, there was never a lack to supply the needs of the ten or twelve patients who occupied the beds in his hospital rooms. God constantly raised up new friends for this work of charity, and He never permitted the doctor's purse nor Marie's larder to become empty.

There might be much to say about this strange little hospital. Every chair, every bed had its own story to tell; but we must forego the pleasure of listening to these, and instead become unseen but interested observers of the Christmas festivities about to be celebrated in the large living room of the doctor's home.

The doctor came home in the nick of time, for the sick little children must not be kept awake too late, and all of them were eager to learn what the Christ child

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had in store for each. Marie had made all the preliminary arrangements, and as soon as her brother had lit the candles in the tree, the small patients were ushered into the room. First came four little ones tottering on uncertain legs; after them two others were carried in on their little cots, which were placed near the glimmering Christmas tree. How their features glowed, how their eyes sparkled! Marie struck up a Christmas song in which the children feebly joined:

“O welcome, thrice welcome, dear children;
draw nigh
To Bethlehem’s manger where Jesus doth lie.
Behold the rich gifts that He brings!
Bless His name,
Bow down and adore Him, His glory proclaim.”

It was pathetic to hear the children’s voices lifted to praise the Christ child. It was touching to note the glowing gratitude they manifested upon receiving their simple little gifts. Here a little girl pressed a doll to her heart with maternal tenderness; there a solemn-faced lad, called “Uncle” because of his serious de-

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meanor, proudly pressed a fur cap down over his curly head; and a poor little invalid, too sick to be up, paraded the inmates of an entire Noah's Ark over her bed. In the midst of the joyous chatter and merriment Harry and Marie passed to and fro sharing in the happiness they had brought to others.

Thereupon they entered the room where the older patients were lying. Here, too, was a Christmas tree whose sparkling lights were reflected in the eyes of the sufferers. As Harry and Marie passed from bed to bed with joyous Christmas greetings and suitable gifts for each one, many an eye was dimmed with tears, and feeble lips endeavored to stammer forth words of gratitude. Thereafter Dr. Warner read the sacred Christmas story, and kneeling prayed that God might teach all to know the divine love which had sent Christ into the world to save and to give eternal life to all who believed on Him. Finally Marie led in the singing of the following Christmas song:

“O holy night that brings the message
Of God the Father's love to me!
O heav'nly light, the joyous presage

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Of Christ's salvation full and free!
More than a thousand suns, its light
Shines forth to banish sin's dark night."

It had grown late when Marie led her brother into his own room where she had prepared a light repast for him. He, too, had secretly prepared various surprises for his sister. Judge, then, of their mutual surprise when they beheld the transformation that had taken place in the room!

In the center of the room stood a Christmas tree with many shining candles and white angels with golden wings vividly reminding them of that other Christmas tree twenty-four years ago which had made two little forsaken waifs believe that they had reached heaven at last. Neither the doctor nor his sister knew where the tree had come from. Its foot rested in the richest soil from which a tree had ever sprung, namely, a large tub of the creamiest butter! On the sturdy limbs hung strange fruits of many kinds: a ham, a brisket of beef, a pair of rabbits, a great variety of Christmas sausages, baskets containing coffee, sugar, rice, etc. But the most precious fruits of all were a number

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of golden apples—golden in the strictest sense of the word, for sticking out from all sides of these apples were gold coins that glimmered in the light of the candles. From the largest of these apples hung a card containing the legend:

“I am sure that you will know how to make use of the apples.

Mother Sarah”

From the very top of the tree fluttered a small flag bearing the inscription:

“For the Warners and their patients.”

Deeply moved, Harry and Marie stood lost in contemplation of their rich gifts, which they regarded as an expression of love on the part of their friends and neighbors, and as a material blessing from the Christ-child Himself. Holding the large golden apple in her hand, Marie prayed in her heart that it might be an earnest of the giver’s willingness to give herself to Jesus.

What bountiful supplies, what riches had come to them! With kitchen, pantry, and purse filled, what opportunities they had of helping others!

“Who could imagine that our neighbors would be so kind to us?” Marie exclaimed.

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"It only goes to prove how much they think of you," her brother declared cordially.

"But still more of you," Marie protested. "You are their doctor, and their closest friend and adviser."

"Well, well, we will not argue the point," said Dr. Warner, beaming upon his sister. "After all, God is the real giver, and to Him we will above all render our expressions of praise and thanksgiving. How wonderfully He has led us since the day we set out together in search of heaven!"

"And we have found it, haven't we, Harry?" cried Marie jubilantly. "We have found heaven even here on earth!"

When the candles in the Christmas tree had burnt down, Marie and Harry still sat in the now dimly lighted room, and before they retired for the night their united voices were lifted to heaven in song:

'To heav'n above, to heav'n above!
Our watchword be this ever.
From our bright home beyond the skies
May we be parted never!
Eternal bliss, divinest love
Awaits us there in heav'n above."

A WONDERFUL
CHRISTMAS



A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS

I.

*Unto your parents willing service tender
To ease their burdens and to cheer their lot,
Your service is no gift, you merely render
Some small return for favors you have got.*

A GENTLEMAN of ruddy countenance and brisk but kindly mien stepped out from a gray little cottage, the simple home of the weaver Gerber and his family. After him a lad of ten appeared and with a timid, anxious voice exclaimed:

“O, Dr. Braun!”

“What now?” Dr. Braun inquired. “Are you sick, too?”

“No, no,” the boy replied; “but won’t you please tell me what will make my father well again?”

“What are you driving at, my little man? I don’t quite catch your meaning.”

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"You said in there that there is only one thing that can cure father, but that it is impossible to obtain. O Sir, tell me what it is."

"My dear boy," said the doctor, "I suppose you are thinking of some wonderful healing plant which you would be willing to search for, even if you had to climb the highest mountain tops."

"Yes," the boy replied with a determined nod.

"If there were such a plant, I would get it myself," the doctor replied. "But that is not what I meant."

"O, kind Sir, tell me what you did mean."

"It's no use, but I'll tell you just the same. You see the mountains yonder. On the other side of them there is a valley with springs of healing waters that, I think, would cure your father's lameness and give strength to his arms."

"I'll go and fetch that water for father," declared the boy eagerly.

"No, David; that won't do at all. The distance is too great. Besides, it's necessary to drink the water just at it comes

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warm from the springs, and also to bathe in it."

"And you really think that father would get well again if he did that?" asked David eagerly.

"Yes, I hope so; if he could stay at the springs for six weeks, be without anxiety, get nourishing food, and ride around in the open air all day long."

"Would my mother get well there, too?"

"No, my lad, I'm afraid not. But if your father could go there soon, say in June, the healing waters would restore his health and give him strength to work again. I should like to send many of my patients to the springs, but I fear they lack the means to go."

This was by no means the last conversation between David and Dr. Braun on this subject. Every time the doctor called, the conversation was eagerly renewed by David, and the upshot of it was that the doctor finally gave his consent to a plan of David's so strange and daring that he was heard to mutter admiringly:

"That boy has grit! I do believe he'll carry it through."

From that day the doctor's coach house

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became the scene of tireless activity carried on with utmost secrecy. David and his twin brother Jonathan spent all their spare moments behind its closed doors, and sounds of sawing and hammering aroused the curiosity of the neighbors. Dr. Braun shared the secret of the boys, and his lively interest in their undertaking was manifested by frequent visits to their workshop. One day the doctor's old armchair was carried into the shed, much to the astonishment of curious neighbors, who wondered why Dr. Braun was so interested in the doings of the weaver's twin sons.

One bright day in June the shed doors were thrown open and the young mechanics triumphantly appeared with their masterpiece on which they had labored so long and faithfully. But what queer contraption was this! Behold, the doctor's old armchair covered with bright new canvas, and resting on a low four-wheeled truck supplied with a tongue for pulling it! A queer carriage, indeed, but serviceable, and that was the main consideration with David and Jonathan. One thing alone was lacking, namely, a horse to draw

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it. But wait! Here come two prancing steeds that hitch themselves to the conveyance. To be sure, they had only two legs each, but to offset this, they had strong arms and stout hearts; and their names were David and Jonathan.

"Off for home with you!" cried the doctor merrily. "I wonder what your parents will say. But never mind, I'll be over presently and arrange matters."

Gerber and his wife were struck with amazement when the strange carriage stopped before their door. The husband was sitting at the window gloomily bemoaning his sad lot; from her bed his wife, almost helpless from rheumatism, tried to discover the cause of the commotion outside. Ursula supported her mother as she sat up to peer through the window. The faces of the twin brothers were radiant with happiness as they entered the house, closely followed by dr Braun.

"Father," cried David; "there is your carriage to take you to the springs at Landeck on the other side of the mountains. In two days we'll be there. Dr. Braun says that we can make it easily."

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"And then you'll get well again, Father," added Jonathan.

Tears sprang to the father's eyes as he shook his head sadly, saying: "It can't be done."

"Why can't it be done?" asked Dr. Braun. "The carriage is strong and comfortable, and the horses are safe if not speedy. At Landeck you can ride around in the open air like a fine gentleman, and after taking the cure for six weeks you will be strong enough to run a race with your brave steeds."

"But the baths cost money, a great deal of money," objected Mr. Gerber. "You have told me that yourself."

"I have arranged that matter with the doctor in charge," declared Dr. Braun. "Baths, water, service, towels—all are free to weaver Gerber. Here you have it in black and white."

"But one needs money for board and lodgings," persisted Mr. Gerber.

"Yes, that's true, and there lies the difficulty," admitted the doctor. "I had hoped also to provide for you in this respect, but all the free places are taken, and my own circumstances are such that

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I can give you very little financial help. Here are a few dollars, however, that will tide you over the first few days, and after that I am sure the Lord will find a way to aid you."

The weaver was deeply moved by Dr. Braun's kindness, but a sudden thought made him shake his head sadly and say:

"But what is to become of my wife and children during my absence?"

"Don't let that trouble you," his wife hastened to say. "We will manage to get along, and perhaps we will even be able to send a little money to aid you."

"Listen to me, Gerber," said the doctor sternly. "What are you now able to do for your family? Nothing at all. But if your health is restored, it will be in your power to support your family next winter."

"Three dollars a week is poor support for a family of seven," protested the weaver bitterly.

"My dear husband," pleaded his wife; "don't sin against God by speaking such words. In the past we have suffered neither from hunger nor cold more than we could bear. The children are growing

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up, and are already a great help to us. There are many others who have greater cause for complaint than we have."

"Sick people generally look upon the dark side of life," said Dr. Braun soothingly. "You need have no fears for the well-being of your family. In spite of her ailments your wife is full of hope and courage, and Ursula is already an expert in the making of laces for which I promise to secure purchasers. And now, boys, a word to you. Early next Monday morning you will set out with your father for the health resort. By evening you will arrive at the cottage of the game warden where you are to spend the night. The following day, long before night, you will reach the home of Dr. Schultz in Landeck. He will tell you what to do, and mind you, boys, and you, too, Gerber, follow the doctor's directions to the letter. I hope that your stay at the Springs will help you, but you must also do your part to gain this end: obey the doctor, stop complaining, and try to become more cheerful."

With these words the doctor bade an abrupt farewell and departed, leaving the weaver's family silent and abashed. The

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journey to Landeck was indeed a large undertaking. To David and Jonathan alone it presented no great difficulties. Their plans were laid and all arrangements made. In the first place, they had Dr. Schultz to turn to, and a doctor, as everyone knows, can do whatever he wants to. In the second place, they had ten dollars in money, a huge sum, that would support their father for several weeks. And as for themselves, wasn't it summer? They could sleep outdoors if necessary, and there were berries in the woods and bread to be had for a few cents at the bakery. Dr. Braun had told them that there would be many opportunities to earn money by running errands and doing odd jobs. Already they were planning what to do with it. They would buy back the goat which their father's illness had forced them to sell. Mother and Theresa would then have nourishing milk, and perhaps they could even pay the debts they had incurred. Everything was possible to the boys who had planned and built for their father the wonderful carriage which Jonathan thought was fit for the king himself.

Meanwhile the parents were planning

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for the immediate future. Mrs. Gerber, particularly, took a cheerful view of it.

"Go in God's name and without fear," she said. "No prince has such horses as you have. Let David write to us, and Ursula will send you what help we can. There are berries in the woods, which the girls can pick and sell, and Dr. Braun has promised to buy all the medicinal plants and roots that the children can find. Don't worry about us. Summer is the poor man's friend. Perhaps even I can be of some help, although my hands are not of much account."

"You are the mainstay of the family," protested Mr. Gerber. "Without your help we would long ago have lost all hope."

"God is our mainstay and our help," declared his wife soberly. "Hitherto He has not forsaken us, and if we trust in Him, He will keep us to the end of life."

II.

*"Mountain air and healing waters
Are a blessing from above.
All the gifts of nature are a
Token of God's care and love."*

Letter from David to his mother.

"Dear Mother:

You will of course want to know how we fared on our trip to Landeck. Everything went well, and the doctor says that we came just in time and can have the best of hopes that father will get well. We had to pull pretty hard in the upgrades but we made it all right. The game warden's wife fed us on dandy pancakes the first evening. Dear Mother, there are so many people up here at the Springs, and all seem to be so grand and rich. Father complains that they look at us when we haul him around in his carriage, but Jonathan and I don't mind that at all. We tip our caps when they smile and nod at us. Father sends his greetings to you all.

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We live in a small room where father sleeps in a good bed and we on some straw on the floor. Father says that everything is very dear here, but we always have enough to eat and we still have a great deal of money left. Father takes the baths and drinks the water from the springs every day. The water tastes nasty, but they say it is awfully healing. Tell Ursula to tend well our patches of beans and potatoes. That's all for this time. Take good care of yourselves. Dear Mother, we say our prayers every day.

Your obedient son

David."

We see from the above that our three travelers had arrived at their destination. Dr. Schultz had received them kindly, and secured for them a room some distance from the springs, but then it only cost eight dollars for the entire six weeks. The doctor saw to it that his patient received wholesome food at a very reasonable price. He did not trouble himself about the boys, but their father had many anxious moments concerning them. They were used to simple fare, but even the simplest fare costs money, and the two

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ten-year-olds had healthy appetites. At the present rate their limited means would soon give out.

"We must find some way to earn money, Jonathan," declared the enterprising David one day.

"Yes, that's true, but how?" said Jonathan hopelessly. "Shoes are polished and clothes brushed by the servants of the wealthy patients here, and there seem to be no errands to run nor odd jobs to do."

"Don't talk that way so father hears it," David warned. "You know the doctor says that father must be kept cheerful if he is to get well."

"But what in the world are we to do?" Jonathan asked. "We have scarcely enough bread left to last the day out, and I could have eaten it all myself for breakfast."

"We simply have got to earn some money," David declared. "We'll have to ask God to help us, I guess. Mother says that when we don't know what to do, God has got it all planned, and all we have to do is to ask Him."

"I do wish He would tell us," pouted Jonathan. "Sometimes I get so lonesome

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here among all these people. It won't do to trouble father, but, oh, how I would like to have mother with us!"

"Shame, Jonathan. As if mother didn't have troubles enough of her own! Come, it's time to take father out for a ride among the pine trees in the woods."

"Can't you take him out yourself to-day?" asked Jonathan. "I want to make another effort to earn a few cents."

Said and done. Jonathan went up to the hotel in search of a job. David went off to give his father a ride, well knowing that his brother did not want to bring his discouraged face into the presence of their father.

What a glorious day it was in the woods! Deeper and deeper they penetrated into its cool shades. Suddenly they emerged into an open glade literally carpeted with ripe strawberries.

"Father, Father," David cried; "I do believe that it has rained strawberries here. If I only had something to put them in, we could feast on berries for supper."

"Put them in your cap," his father advised.

David obeyed, but true to the training

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of his mother, he first lined his cap with large green leaves. Within a few minutes David's cap was brimming full of ripe luscious berries, and the store in the glade seemed as yet untouched. He was sorry to leave, but as his father must not be exposed to the cold evening air, they had to start for home, the father holding the heaping cap of berries and David pulling the light wagon.

Before they reached home, they met a finelady, who exclaimed:

"O, what fine strawberries! Are they for sale? How much do you want for them?"

"As much as you are willing to give, kind lady," the father replied.

"Is a dollar enough?" she asked. "Let me see them. But what are you carrying them in?"

"In my cap," David replied shamefacedly.

"In your cap! Then I'm afraid I can't use them. But if you bring me a basket full to-morrow I will pay you well for them. I live in the house on the corner. Be sure to bring the berries before ten o'clock."

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David promised. How near he had been to earning a whole dollar—but wait till to-morrow! While David was musing thus, the proprietor of the large hotel approached, and seeing the capful of strawberries he said briskly:

“I’ll take them; here is half a dollar. My guests know nothing of your cap, and what they don’t know won’t hurt them.”

Hardly believing his good fortune, David eyed the money in his hand and joyously exclaimed:

“All aboard for the baker’s shop! We’ll live like princes to-day. I wonder what Jonathan will say?”

Poor Jonathan had nothing to say when he returned from his fruitless efforts to earn something, and saw a pitcher of milk standing on the table.

David threw his arms about his brother’s neck and whispered: “The good God has already heard our prayers, and opened a way for us to earn some more money to-morrow.”

The next morning, while their father was still sleeping, the two brothers were off for the woods provided with two large crocks furnished by their kind hostess.

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They found a large store of ripe berries and a still greater supply not yet ready to be picked. Their only anxiety was that other boys might find their treasure; but hoping for the best, they labored industriously and soon had their crocks full.

"Now we must hurry home," said David; "the sun is already high, and father must have his bath. You run on ahead, Jonathan, and I will deliver the berries to the lady. A whole dollar is what I'll get—one hundred cents!"

That afternoon David was wheeling his father around and Jonathan had gone off to the berry patch. David was eager to help him, but he realized that some one must stay with his sleeping father. Perhaps some one else might find their patch and thus deprive them of their source of income. The thought disturbed him; so he turned to a young man sitting on a bench in the shade reading a book, and addressed him pleadingly:

"Kind Sir, do you expect to sit here long?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I should like to ask you to look after my father while I go into the

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woods to pick strawberries. And will you see that he is kept in the shade while I am gone?"

"Well, yes, I think that I can promise to do that," smilingly said the young man.

"O, thank you, thank you!" cried David, preparing to run off, but facing the gentleman again he said:

"You're sure, Sir, that you will take good care of father?"

"Perfectly sure," he replied with sober mien.

When David returned a few hours later, he found the stranger and his father engaged in lively conversation. Seeing the berries in the crocks the stranger remarked:

"Those berries are not put up to the best advantage for sale. In Finland where I come from the children have a better way. They make small baskets of clean, white birch bark, heap them with berries, and thus find a ready sale."

In silent confusion David and Jonathan looked down upon their uninviting crocks, not knowing what to say or do.

"Never mind," said the young man kind-

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ly. "Take them to the hotel keeper who has ordered them. My name is Brender. To-morrow I'll go with you to the woods and teach you how to make neat birch bark baskets. Then you'll see what a rushing business we will do in Landeck."

What bright prospects these words opened up! These two boys were dizzy with joy, and even their father was more contented than he had been for a long time. The following day the boys took their father to the park after he had had his bath and dinner. There they found Mr. Brender awaiting them. Wheeling Mr. Gerber into the shade where he said he could get along without them, they set out for the woods, the tall fine gentleman and the two barefooted boys whose faces shone with glad anticipation. What a store of berries they had on their return a few hours later! After having wheeled their father home, they all set to work filling the dainty little baskets with ripe red berries. There were round baskets and square baskets, large baskets and small baskets, baskets with and without handles. When their work was done it was already evening, and the boys were sadly dis-

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appointed that they could not at once display their wares.

But bright and early the following morning the boys had arranged their baskets on a table near one of the paths in the park. The hotel guests taking their morning walks were agreeably surprised by the fine display of berries.

"How lovely!"—"What an attractive display!"—"Are they for sale?"—"How much do they cost?" such were the exclamations and questions poured upon the two young salesmen, and within a few minutes their entire stock was sold. A miracle had happened. Proudly they hastened home to display a wealth of \$7.50 to their father, who could hardly believe in the truth of the tale they had to tell.

A few days later Mrs. Gerber received the following letter from David:

"Dear Mother:

You should have seen all the strawberries we have picked! The ground was literally covered with them; but other children found the way to our patch, so now they are all gone. But we had the best berries, and everybody bought from us. We earned \$40.85. What do you



*As Mrs. Gerber was too much
of an invalid to write, Ursula
replied to David's letter.*

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think of that? Father has it all written down. He is much better now, and is able to walk a little in front of our house. Mr. Brender, who is much bigger than we are, supports him by holding his arm. The doctor says that father is sure to get well. Dear Mother, you ought to have seen the baskets we made for our berries. Mr. Brender showed us how to make them of birch bark. We printed verses on them, which pleased the hotel guests very much. We got the verses from an old book which our hostess let us borrow. Here are two of the verses which I liked the best:

Pretty, luscious berries, tell us
Who has painted you so red
Lying there so snug abed?
Whence your fragrance? Did it come
Down to us from heaven's home?

Who but God, our Heav'nly Father,
Can bestow such colors bright,
And so pleasing to our sight?
All things in the bright green wood
Tell us that our God is good.

Pretty verses, aren't they, Mother? As the strawberries are gone, and it isn't time for blueberries yet, Mr. Brender is teach-

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ing us how to make bouquets of all kinds of flowers that grow in the fields and woods: ferns, camomiles, milkworts, forget-me-nots, mosses, bluebells, trefoils, etc. I can't understand how anyone will be willing to pay good money for such things. It was different with the berries; people could eat them—well, we will see what luck we have. The people here are kind to us; we know most of them already. Mr. Brender leaves to-morrow. We are sorry to see him go, as he has been very kind to us. Father wants to know if you need any money; we have quite a sum now, but everything is very dear here. Dear Mother, how are you all, and how is the potato patch getting along? In about two weeks we will be home with you again. Father is looking forward to the day. Jonathan is also writing to you; but what we are planning to do neither he nor I will tell, for that is a secret.

Your obedient son,
DAVID GERBER."

As Mrs. Gerber was too much an invalid to write, Ursula replied to David's letter as follows:

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“Dear Father:

We are very glad that you are getting along so well. Mother wants you to be very careful, so that you may come home fully restored to health and strength. She is happy to hear that the twins are so well behaved. Tell them to remember to pray every day as we are doing here, then the good God will continue to help us all. Mother wants you to dress warmly for the trip over the mountains, as the wind blows cold there. The doctor advises you to stay with the game warden over night, as you did in going. We are getting along quite well, even if we cannot pay off anything on the debt, as mother would like to do. Perhaps you will have some money left when you come home. We are living now on the money I get for my laces, and also on what we can make by selling berries, although we don't get near as much for them as you do. We also have a secret, but we are not sure yet how it will turn out. The potato patch is flourishing, and so are the other vegetables in our little garden. Mother wants you to know that your girls are good and doing all they can

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to help, and that she is feeling as well as can be expected.

Your loving daughter

URSULA."

The day came when Mr. Gerber's cure at the springs was completed. Dr. Schultz assured him that he would continue to improve after he got home. Mr. Gerber was eager to make the start, and hoped that he would be able to walk part of the way.

"Only short stretches," warned the doctor. "And why should you walk when you have such a fine pair of horses?" he added, smiling upon David and Jonathan who stood near.

Yes, David and Jonathan had proved to be a splendid team, and invaluable to their father. With tireless energy they had picked berries and flowers early and late, disposed of these to the satisfaction of their patrons, saved their earnings, and won the good will of all.

"It is all a result of their mother's training," murmured Mr. Gerber. "From her bed of sickness she is still the guiding star in our lives."

Their return journey was planned to begin on the following day. But on this

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the last day of their stay at Landeck the twin brothers were busier than ever. Great masses of flowers were gathered and arranged in neat bouquets, to each of which a verse inscribed on a card was attached, of which the following is a fair sample:

“God in His love has decked our earth
With flowers without end.
Permit us then to send you these,
As friends unto our friend.”

This time, however, there was no thought of sale or barter. Not thought of gain, but gratitude alone prompted their actions that early morning hour, as they passed from house to house depositing a bouquet on the doorstep of each of their many friends and benefactors. Sad to say, Mr. Brender had already departed, wherefore the flowers intended for him were placed at the doctor's door, and the accompanying verse was the one that David liked best of all:

“As the lily pure and white,
As the violet chaste and bright,
Faithful as the wintergreen,
Loving as the rose you've been.”

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When the good doctor read these lines, a sense of unworthiness swept over him, and he resolved to make every effort to approach, at least, the high standard set him by his young friends.

For their kind old hostess, who had so generously supplied them with milk during their stay, they found a verse which they regarded as especially apt, and over which they had a hearty laugh as they attached it to a bouquet of clover blossoms and daisies:

“All the good milk that you gave
Has two puny boys made over.
Lately in your pasture green
It was flourishing as clover.”

Thereupon the boys ran down for the hundredth time, at least, to the barn to pet and fondle the splendid coal-black goat which they had bought from their hostess the day before with the money they had saved from their berry picking. The goat was to be a surprise to their father and a source of joy to their mother and sisters. Of all the misfortunes that had befallen the sorely tried family none was felt quite so keenly as the loss of the goat which

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had been sold to pay a pressing debt. Good old Nanny had supplied the whole family with milk, and her keep had cost them next to nothing, as she seemed to thrive on what she could pick up for herself. How they had longed for another goat, and how they had despaired of ever obtaining one!

But now their fondest hopes were realized. A new goat was theirs, better, more beautiful than the old one, and best of all, their own unaided efforts had furnished the money to buy her! Indeed, it is questionable if David and Jonathan would have bartered their goat for the mightiest kingdom on earth.

Their father's improved health and the possession of the goat made the return journey seem to the boys a triumphal procession. At first Mr. Gerber was unwilling to ride, protesting that David and Jonathan had served him as horses long enough; but upon the urgent advice of the doctor he took his place in the homemade carriage.

"Here are the reins," smilingly said David, placing a slender rope in his father's hands.

Mr. Gerber, however, was quick to note

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that the other end of the rope was attached, not to his prancing steeds David and Jonathan, but to a sleek black goat.

"It's our groat, Father," both the boys cried; "and she is going with us home. We have bought her with the money we have saved."

Tears came into Mr. Gerber's eyes, but they were tears of joy and gratitude. As he sat in his improvised carriage after the homeward journey was begun, he reflected on the goodness of God, substantial evidences of which were his improved health, the brighter outlook for the future, the well filled lunch basket in his lap, and, last but not least, the sleek goat trotting contentedly by his side.

The floral remembrances left as parting gifts to their many friends in Landeck touched many a heart, and many an expression of friendly regard was uttered concerning the members of the interesting family that had been so grateful for the small favors they had received.

III.

“Forth and back the shuttle flies,
As his trade the weaver plies,
Weaving into warp and woof
Prayers to God for kin and roof.

‘Lord, Thy goodness and Thy grace
Are the warp and woof Thou usest
In the weaving of my days.
Never Thou my prayer refusest.’ ”

For a time it seemed that this promise was to be abundantly fulfilled upon the Gerber family. Especially were there two circumstances that combined to enhance the happiness of the reunited family. The one was the unexpected possession of the goat, and the other was the redeeming of the family loom, which had been mortgaged to pay a debt. Just as David and Jonathan had accomplished the former, so Ursula and her sisters had through their industry accomplished the latter. It was a happy day for Mr. Ger-

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ber when he again sat down to the loom and with a whispered prayer to God resumed the task so long interrupted by his protracted sickness. The rhythmic flight of the shuttle gave promise of steady if meager income.

Summer and autumn passed uneventfully. One of the children assisted the father in spooling the yarn, while the others added their bit as best they could to the earnings of the family. But try as they would, they were unable to reduce, much less remove, the mortgage on their little home.

Winter set in early with bitter cold and shortening days. The cost of light and fuel added to the burdens of the distressed family, and as in addition to this there were seven mouths to feed and warm clothing to be procured, it is not to be wondered at that the combined earnings of father and children did not suffice to make payment on the mortgage after the most pressing needs of the family had been supplied.

Faster and ever faster flew the shuttle but there was no corresponding increase in earnings, for Mr. Gerber's work was

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constantly interrupted by broken threads in the loom.

"What wretched yarn they furnish now!" he grumbled. "All the good yarn goes to the power looms in the factories, and the poor yarn is left to us who operate the hand looms. My four dollars a week represent double work and less than half pay."

"Don't lose courage, my dear husband," pleaded his wife from her sickbed. "We must take the work as it comes. Ursula will help you mend the broken threads."

"But at this rate I am scarcely earning my salt," the impatient weaver lamented.

"You mustn't forget," admonished the wife, "that we have quite a store of potatoes in our cellar, and then there is our precious Nanny goat. David, my boy, see to it that she is made snug and warm for the winter. Let us remember with gratitude to God that we are better lotted than many others."

"But the interest on the mortgage!" groaned the weaver. "If we can't pay that, we will soon be without house and home. The mill owner has already threatened me several times."

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"He will surely take pity on us," his wife comforted. "He knows how long you have been sick."

The days grew steadily shorter and the nights longer. Their store of potatoes grew smaller and the speed of the shuttle greater. But the prospects of better days diminished with the passing time.

"Merciful God," pleaded Mrs. Gerber from her bed of sickness; "Thou art able to touch with compassion even the hardest heart. Incline the hard heart of our creditor to pity, lest my dear ones be driven out in the midst of winter into the cold and cruel world."

So with anguished heart she prayed many a sleepless night, but with the coming of morning she was again bright and cheerful, ordering her household from her sickbed with wise and loving forethought, so that more of cheer and even of comfort was found in her home than in many other homes similarly situated. Without such a mother Ursula and the twins would never have been the active, courageous children that they were. They in turn loved their mother dearly, anticipating her every need and waiting on her with so tender care

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that she more than once assured her husband that they were rich indeed in the possession of their five children.

On such occasions the father would nod his approval, and his face would brighten momentarily, only to be again overcast as he bent over the loom weaving many a tear but also many a prayer into the cloth before him.

IV.

“A word in earnest spoken, or, mayhap in
jest,
Far-flung upon life’s never-resting sea,
A precious pearl becomes at God’s behest
For time and for eternity.”

Mr. Brender, the young Finn, who had been so kind to David and Jonathan at Landeck, was pursuing studies at the University of Berlin. A year and a half had passed since he had seen his native land or his parents, and not before the following summer would he return to them. The Finns, like the Swiss, are passionately fond of the bold and rugged contours of their native lands, and suffer greatly from homesickness when separated from them for any length of time.

This was especially true at Christmas time, when he sorely missed the home of his childhood, its great festive-decked hall with the glowing yule log in the open fireplace, and the long series of Christmas

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festivities joyously celebrated by relatives and friends. Though many a hospitable home stood open for him here in Germany, they were not his home nor his people. No wonder, then, that he felt lonely and homesick as Christmas now drew near!

On this particular morning young Brender was eagerly waiting for the postman. His Christmas letter from home was due, and never yet had his father disappointed him in matters great or small. There the postman comes at last, and with him the longed-for letter. Besides the loving Christmas greetings the letter contained a draft for \$600, concerning which his father had the following words to say:

“My dear son:—We shall miss you greatly in the family circle this coming Christmas, but every laudable aim in life is only attained by making personal sacrifices. We wish, however, to afford you some measure of Christmas joy, so, as there is no suitable Christmas present that we can conveniently send you from the far-off land in the North, I am inclosing the accompanying draft. You are at liberty to spend the amount for books or

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travel, or to promote the happiness of your friends. I am asking you for no accounting as to the manner in which you spend it. My hope, however, is that the money will in some way help to give you true Christmas joy."

"Good old Dad!" murmured young Brender. "He shows great confidence in a son who must confess to many a foolish and thoughtless act. Foolish and thoughtless, perhaps, but never unclean. In spite of his years and hoary head, the dear old father is young enough to understand and make allowance for the thoughtlessness of youth."

Impulsively he pressed the letter to his lips.

"Six hundred dollars," he mused. "Quite a large Christmas present, I must say. I'll use part of it to make a trip with my friend Stoner to his home in Silesia. I enjoyed my stay there last summer, and it will be a pleasure to see that mountainous region in its mantle of snow and ice. I'm longing for a real winter landscape like that of my native Finland. We will roam for four or five days through the mountains and time our arrival at his

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home in the Lutheran parsonage for Christmas Eve."

So on Dec. 19 it came about that Brender and his friend Stoner set out for the mountains of Silesia. How different their aspect now! Last summer thousands of people had thronged the hotels and cottages scattered throughout the valleys. Now these stood empty, and booths and outhouses served only as shelters for the wild life of the forest against the cold and storms of winter. The pines and firs alone retained their summer verdure, but the bare limbs of oak and birch gleamed and sparkled with icy crystals like queens decked in all the finery of their crown jewels. Grander, more refreshing even than in summer seemed the winter scene of mountains and valleys spread out before the admiring eyes of the two young men.

They had been traveling mostly by sled from place to place. By this means they were now able to reach many localities which in summer were inaccessible. Occasionally they would leave their driver with the sled and with alpenstock in hand ascend some towering mountain peak, from whose summit a glorious panorama

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of forest, hill, and dale lay spread out beneath them, glittering in the bright rays of the winter sun.

The two young men had enjoyed every moment of their trip through the mountains, but now its end was near, for this day was Dec. 24, and that evening they must reach the parsonage where Stoner's parents lived. So they hastened on, and by noon arrived at a village where they planned to have their dinner while the horses were resting. The cold had increased, and they were glad of an opportunity to beat their arms and stamp their feet. They even challenged each other to a race in order to increase the circulation of the blood.

"Do you know what I wish?" cried Brender. "I wish something would happen, an adventure of some kind, or even a round or two with the fists to take the cold and stiffness out of my joints."

"Your wish bids fair to come true," remarked Stoner. "Something unusual is going on over yonder. Don't you see the crowd of people gathered there?"

"Let's investigate," cried Brender mer-

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rily. "Who would think that anything could happen in this peaceful region?"

As the two friends approached the crowd, they heard a strong voice crying:

"Three hundred dollars, once—Do I hear another bid? Three hundred dollars, twice—. Three hundred—"

"Four hundred dollars!" cried someone in the rear of the crowd.

All turned to gaze in astonishment at the bold bidder. They beheld a young man whose eyes sparkled with fun and excitement. Beside him stood another youth vainly trying to restrain him. The former mockingly took up the auctioneer's refrain, and shouted:

"Four hundred dollars—once, twice, three times and sold for four hundred dollars."

By this time the auctioneer had somewhat recovered from his astonishment and retorted importantly:

"Not so fast, young man! The sale is not yet ended. Show me your four hundred dollars, or furnish a reliable local bondsman who will supply the money before the day is over."

"Your anxiety is needless, my good Sir,"

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cried young Brender merrily. "My father's son is happy in the possession of four hundred dollars in cash on Christmas Eve. Here they are, count them yourself."

So saying the young man placed four crisp one hundred dollar bills in the auctioneer's hand. Putting on his spectacles, the latter closely examined the bills, eyed the young man narrowly, then raised his gavel and cried:

"Four hundred dollars, once, twice,—are you all done? Four hundred dollars, three times and sold."

The gavel descended with a crash, and the onlookers stirred uneasily, as if awaking from a strange dream.

"Well, my dear man," said Brender; "now show me what I've bought."

Stricken dumb with amazement, the auctioneer could only stand and stare at a man so foolhardy in a serious financial transaction. At last he blurted out:

"Don't you really know what you have bought?"

"How should I know," asked Brender, "when no one has told me? My only hope is that you know what you have sold."

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The auctioneer struck his breast, and solemnly declared:

"Young Sir: you have bought property No. 67 consisting of a cottage, a sheepfold and a quarter of an acre of land; and of all this you are now the rightful owner."

Laughingly Brender exclaimed: "I've surely put my foot into it now!"

"Can't the sale be revoked?" anxiously asked Brender's companion.

"The sale revoked! O no, my fine young gentlemen, no one can make sport of a servant of the Imperial Department of Justice. What's done is done. When my gavel once falls, no power on earth can raise it. And that's the end of it!"

"Be calm, my good man," said Brender still laughing merrily. "I assure you that I am quite content to be a landed proprietor in this place."

"Landed proprietor!" exclaimed the auctioneer. "Who said you were a landed proprietor? A cottage, a sheepfold, and a quarter acre of land are the extent of your holdings. Shall I show you your new possessions? Perhaps, when you have seen them you will not be so satisfied as you pretend to be."

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“Don’t trouble yourself,” Brender replied. “I must first get something to eat. I would have you know, Mr. Auctioneer, that hunger is a serious complaint, and I am not inclined to begin my career as a property owner in Silesia by starving to death. After I have dined, some one will surely direct me to my newly acquired possessions.”

“Yes, indeed,” the auctioneer mockingly replied. “Any villager will direct you to no. 67.”

V.

“Courage, faint heart, do not forget
The God who counts your tears.
His sun will shine upon you yet,
And drive away dark fears.”

We will now go back a few hours in time, and see how the Gerber family began their Christmas Eve. On the whole, this day was only a continuation of many past days and nights. What the summer had laid in store the winter with its bitter cold and darkness had greedily consumed. All the members of the weaver's family worked to the limit of their strength; even the mother's fingers, distorted though they were by rheumatism, were constantly employed in mending the clothes of husband and children. The father was busy at his loom early and late, grateful to God for restored health, but often discouraged by the seemingly hopeless task of making both ends meet. David and Jonathan did all the spooling

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of the yarn for their father, and besides scoured the woods for fuel to keep out the winter cold. Ursula's busy fingers were tireless in their task of lace making. Under the guidance of her older sister, Sabina performed a large share of the household duties, and even little Theresa was busy learning Christmas carols. All were, consequently, fully occupied, but nevertheless they found it difficult to keep the wolf from the door, and actual want now stared them in the face.

Their greatest source of anxiety was the mortgage that burdened their humble home, not even the interest on which had been paid this last year. Gerber and his wife had hoped to the last that the mill owner, who held the mortgage, would exercise patience with them, especially as he had known them in their better days, and knew them to be honest and industrious. But some time before, he had served notice on them that he wanted, not only the interest, but the entire amount of the loan. They found it difficult to believe that he was serious in this demand, but regarded it rather as a threat to make them pay the interest. Now, however, on

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Christmas Eve itself their little home was to be sold over their heads, and by New Year's they were ordered to vacate.

What were they to do? Where was Mr. Gerber to find roof and shelter from the winter's cold for his invalid wife and five children? Instead of Christmas cheer, destitution, dark and forbidding, had entered heart and home.

A few days before, the weaver had completed a piece of work for the mill. Day and night he had worked at it. Repeatedly broken threads had retarded his labors. In his discouragement and despair it seemed to him that it were best if the threads of life of all the members of his family would also break, thus liberating them from their wretched state.

True, he fought manfully against such gloomy thoughts, and constantly tried to infuse hope and courage into the hearts of wife and children. He promised to lay their needs before the mill owner, who would, no doubt, find some way for them out of their difficulties. Perhaps he would pay double price for the work just completed, especially as it had taken him

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double time to complete it on account of the inferior quality of the yarn.

He also planned to leave his whole wages for the work done as partial payment of the interest on the mortgage. Perhaps this would soften the mill owner's heart and cause him to postpone the sale of their home. The few cents still remaining to him he would use to buy what Christmas cheer he could for his wife and children.

So on the day before Christmas Eve the weaver set out for the mill, bent under the heavy burden of the bolt of cloth on his shoulders. The winter sun shone brightly, and his faithful wife's parting words still comforted his heart:

"Commit to God's great mercy
Thy burden and thy way."

Courage, therefore! In God's good time all would still be well!

When he returned from the mill that evening, the sun had set, and the outer darkness seemed also to have settled down over his soul. He had not been able to see the mill owner, and the superintendent had received him with harsh words, charg-

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ing him with poor workmanship and threatening to withhold further work if he did not do better. As it was, he received only half pay for the work he had done. He was also informed that an additional power loom would soon be set up in the mill, materially reducing the number of weavers needed. He was further told that his services would not be required until after the holidays.

Sorrow and anger filled his heart as with lagging steps he neared his home. Tears trickled down his cheeks and hung as tiny icicles from his beard. The Christmas cheer that he had intended to provide for his family was forgotten.

That morning the twins had hastened off to the forest to gather a store of dry limbs and branches. As they worked, they discussed ways and means of adding to the meager resources of the family.

"If I only knew," cried David, "the best way to be of help! I would be willing to try anything. I was thinking some days ago of cutting down young evergreens and sending them to the city for Christmas, but mother advised against it."

"I would never care to see another

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Christmas tree so long as I live, if we could only keep our little home," cried Jonathan almost in tears.

Meanwhile, in a last desperate effort to stave off utter ruin Mr. Gerber sought out the mill owner and pleaded with him so abjectly that it might have moved a stone to pity. But all in vain.

"I'm sorry," the mill owner replied, "but I can wait no longer for my money. The sale has been legally advertised, and it's too late to make a change now."

"Too late!" That was the message the despairing man had to carry home on Christmas Eve!

But his devoted wife did much to dispel the gloom in his soul.

"Courage!" she pleaded; "God lives. Never yet has He forsaken those who trust in Him. Surely, He will not permit us to be thrust out into the winter cold. He who hears the cry of ravens will also hear our children's prayers. Listen, they are praying now."

"Dear God, let us keep our home. Dear God, let us keep our home," the little girls kept repeating over and over.

"Would *you* turn a deaf ear to your chil-

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dren's prayers?" his wife continued. "Surely not! How, then, can you think that God will fail to hear them? Be of good courage, then, and trust in God."

"O, I can't, I can't!" the weaver moaned.

Clasping his hands in hers, she said softly: "Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief."

Just at that moment David and Jonathan came rushing into the room crying: "Now the people are gathering in the square. The sale will soon begin."

"So, it has come to that, at last!" groaned the father.

"Pray, children, pray!" urged the mother. "He who sent us the gift of His Son on Christmas Eve will also give us a roof over our heads."

Ursula brought in their scanty dinner, but only Theresa and the twins partook of it. The father sat listening with bated breath for some sound from the square where the sale was going on, while the twins had breathed upon the frosted windows to obtain a peephole through which they might catch a glimpse of what was going on.

"Now they are coming from the square;

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the sale must be over," both boys cried excitedly.

Presently their neighbor, weaver Smith, entered. His solemn, sympathetic mien told them the worst, even before he opened his mouth to speak. Even then a ray of cheer entered their hearts, for he told them that their home had been sold to a stranger for four hundred dollars, and as the amount of the mortgage was only three hundred eighty, they would be out of debt and still have a few dollars over. But what should they do; where should they find a roof to shelter them?

All gathered about their mother's bed. No lights were lit, and none were needed, for there was no work to do, and the darkness would serve to hide their tears. So, this was Christmas Eve, when joy was supposed to reign in hut and palace, in heaven and on earth! Bitter thoughts filled Mr. Gerber's heart, and even the children sat in gathering darkness with despairing hearts. The mother alone would not yield to despair.

"God lives! He will surely come to our aid," she whispered again and again.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door.

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The same thought occurred to all of them—the new owner was coming to take possession. Timidly David opened the door, and the stranger entered.

“Good evening, all of you,” he cried cheerfully, “and Merry Christmas to you! But why do you sit in the dark on Christmas Eve? I know it’s only four o’clock, but daylight is fading fast. Come, let’s have a light, as I have only a short time to finish my business with you.”

Ursula hastened to comply with the stranger’s request, but her hands trembled so that she could not light the lamp. The stranger came to her aid, struck a match, lit the lamp, and stood revealed to their eyes.

“It’s he, Father! It’s Mr. Brender, Mother!” cried David and Jonathan in turn. “It’s the kind gentleman who taught us how to make baskets and bouquets in Landeck last summer.”

“What’s this I see!” exclaimed the stranger. “The twins, as I’m alive! And my good friend Gerber! Is this your house?”

“It was,” stammered the weaver. “But are you? have you?”—

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"Yes. I am the new owner, and I have bought the house," cried Mr. Brender in a voice as joyful as that of the twins a moment before.

"Great God!" he continued soberly. "I heard of your troubles at the inn, but I never dreamt that it was you. Had I known that, I would have bid twice as much for the house rather than let it go out of my hands. So this is your wife, and this must be Ursula, and this Sabina, and this little Theresa. You see I remember your names." So saying, he shook them all by the hand cordially.

"I am happier than I can tell you," he continued, "to think that I happened to come here just to-day, and that a spirit of fun impelled me to bid in your house at the sale. Children, light all the lamps and all the candles you have, I want to get a good look at you all and at my new house."

More lights were brought in while the young man paced the room, keenly enjoying the dramatic situation he had brought about.

"What are you going to do with the house?" asked David hesitatingly.

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"That's what I would like to know," added Jonathan.

"What I'm going to do with it!" Mr. Brender exclaimed. "That was a foolish question. Never fear, I'm not going to ship it off to my own home half way to the North Pole. Cottage, sheepfold, and quarter acre of land I'm going to give you all as a Christmas present, and a happier Christmas I coldn't ask for."

Silent amazement filled the hearts of all in the room. What they had heard was so incredible that it simply could not be true. It was all a beautiful dream, from which the next word spoken would rudely awaken them. But when Mr. Brender again spoke, the dream became a blessed reality.

"Dear friends," he said; "the loving guidance of God and the generosity of my father have combined to change an act of reckless fun on my part to a blessing for you as well as for myself. Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. From this moment the home is yours, free from all burden of debt. Even before I knew who lived here, I had determined upon this step. You can imagine, then, how much

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happier I am to learn that I have been able to do a kindness to dear old friends of mine.—No, no, don't thank me. My good father's Christmas gift and the grace of God have brought about this happiness for you and me."

Piously the mother quoted the words of the Psalmist, while they stood about her with folded hands: "Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for He is good; for His loving kindness endureth for ever."

"Children," said Mr. Brender; "sing a Christmas carol. There is one my father dearly loves: 'Holy Night'. Can you sing that?"

"Yes, indeed, we can," they all replied, and without further ado they struck up the well-known song:

"Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright—"

When the song was finished, Mr. Brender said: "Now I'll bid you good night. I'm expected at the home of my friend this evening, but I'll be back to-morrow, and then we will have a Christmas feast together, I promise you. Merry Christmas to you all!"

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And a merry Christmas it proved to be beyond their fondest hopes and expectations.

The following day a transformation had taken place in the cottage as well as in the hearts of the members of the weaver's family. The floor was scrubbed and strewn with white sand and chopped spruce twigs. A brisk fire burned in the kitchen fireplace, over which Ursula was busy preparing a wonderful Christmas dinner. Even the hard-hearted mill owner had sent a generous supply of Christmas sausages for the occasion.

Mr. Brender had asked David to secure a small Christmas tree from the forest, promising that he would supply all the necessary trimmings when he came. There it now stood on a table in the center of the room as an emblem of divine and unending love. Its silent promise was reflected in the sparkling eyes of parents and children. Their past anxieties and cares now seemed to them as a bad dream; for the Helper in all need had stretched forth His loving hand to aid them.

So it came about that the goat was the only member of the weaver's family that

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manifested signs of dissatisfaction. In honor of the sacred season Sabina had twined a wreath of evergreen and hung it about the goat's neck, which decoration she promptly dislodged and proceeded to devour, but found it so unappetizing that she sadly shook her head, as if to say that she would have much preferred a wreath of hay or straw.

At six o'clock a sound of sleigh bells was heard at the weaver's door. Mr. Brender appeared, so loaded down with bundles and packages of all kinds that he seemed to be Santa Claus himself. There were apples and nuts for the Christmas tree. There was a leg of pork, long strings of sausages, coffee, sugar, and fragrant loaves of white bread. There were also animal cookies and books for the children, and besides a dainty sewing basket for Ursula from Mrs. Stoner at the parsonage. When the Christmas tree had been decked and the candles lit, a surge of joy and gladness filled all hearts, and the humble cottage resounded with merriment, the like of which had never been heard within its walls. Nor did the inmates forget to return thanks to God the bountiful Giver

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of all good, and to the blessed Christ-child whose coming into the world made human happiness possible.

When the festivities in the happy home were nearing an end, Mr. Brender had a word to say to its inmates regarding their future.

"I have heard much," he began, "from Rev. Stoner about the unhappy lot of the handloom weavers, and I am happy to be able to tell you that there are brighter prospects in store for you in the future. An association has been formed to sell the products of your looms direct to the merchants, and also to furnish you with a better grade of yarn. This will insure you better working conditions and higher wages. Mr. Gerber, I am pleased to inform you that Rev. Stoner has promised to recommend you to this association. You can therefore look for better days to come. And as for you, boys, I have a proposal to make. Your success with the unique carriage you made for your father last summer proves that you are skillful artisans. Now I want you to build me a little cottage to the right of this one. I will pay for all the material and also for your

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work. I have made arrangements with a carpenter to superintend your labor, but I want you to do the work. Remember, this is to be *my* cottage, and whenever I or members of my family come down here, we will occupy it. At other times, however, you boys are free to use it to sleep in or study in as you see fit. When I come down here to visit you, I will make it a point to find out what you have accomplished."

Their cup of joy was now full to overflowing. Mrs. Gerber, who had never shed a tear in their darkest hour of trial, now burst into a flood of tears. Her happiness was almost greater than she could bear.

"All this has come about because we journeyed to Landeck last summer," David declared. "If we hadn't gone, we would never have met Mr. Brender."

"And if I hadn't been sick, we would never have gone to Landeck," remarked Mr. Gerber with a smile.

"And your sickness was a source of great sorrow to us all," added his wife. "But we realize better now that God doeth all things well, and that under His

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guidance all things work together for good."

"For them that love God," added Mr. Gerber softly. "But I am afraid that our love, and especially mine, has been far from what it ought to be."

When Mr. Brender arose to depart he said: "I want to thank you all for a happy Christmas Day. I will never forget it."

The following day the young man sent a letter to his father containing a full account of how he had spent his Christmas and his father's Christmas present to him. The letter ended with the following closing sentences:

"And so it happened that though far from my home folks, I was able to celebrate the sacred Christmas tide in my own house and with my own folks by adoption, as it were. I have learned to recognize how wonderfully God leads His people—I mean the weaver and his family—and how He can make use of the follies of men to work out His own wise ends. Again I thank you, dear Father, for your generous Christmas present to me. Though used largely for the benefit of

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others, it has proved a great blessing to myself.

I remain now and always with reverence and love,

Your obedient son

CARL AUGUST,

Landed proprietor in Silesia.

THE MIRROR



I WANT to tell you about my friend, Anna Kirby. You see, she is just sixteen years old, and so capable and ambitious. You would be amazed at the things she can do, and do well.

She makes nearly all her own clothing, and can bake and cook better than many a woman who is two or three times her age. And her work in school is among the best. She is looking forward to making something very fine and worth while of her life.

But Anna is displeased sometimes because she feels that her parents are unkind and unsympathetic in curtailing her liberties. They require her to be home at a certain time each evening if she is out with her friends, and her father and mother insist on knowing where she is and whom she is with at all times. She

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came to me the other day and she was quite stormy about it.

"They don't trust me," she exclaimed as the tears ran down her cheeks, "and I am getting too old and grown-up to be watched like a little child."

"Listen," I said, "what is that noise?"

Anna wiped her face and answered at once: "Why, it's a child crying."

I think she was surprised that I would put such a question, for any one would know that it was a child.

"It's little Bobbie Brown," I explained, "and I am quite sure I know what the trouble is. Bobbie is determined to keep running across the street, and his mother is afraid he may be injured by passing automobiles, so she requires that he will stay in their yard. I just heard her call him back, and Bobbie is having a tantrum."

"He ought to have a good spanking," Anna opined. "If he were my child, I'd shut him up in the house or tie him to a tree if he didn't obey."

I shook my head and smiled.

"His mother is kinder to him than that." I remarked. "She wants to teach Bobbie

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to understand the danger and to exercise self-control to the point of obeying her when her requirements are for his own good. Would you call Mrs. Brown an unsympathetic and harsh mother because she is trying to protect Bobbie from automobiles and other street dangers?"

"Why, certainly not," said Anna, crisply.

"I'm not so sure," I returned thoughtfully. "Wouldn't it be better to trust Bobbie? You see he is getting to be quite a big child, and he's very certain he can take care of himself."

Anna looked at me in amazement.

"No," she said disgustedly, "I'd think his mother was unkind and careless and indifferent and very, very stupid if she didn't use her own greater experience to safeguard him."

Then I burst out laughing. You see, I couldn't help it at the expression on Anna's face. She is such a bright girl, that suddenly it flashed upon her that she had given an important verdict in her own case.

"Oh," she said rather sheepishly as she jumped up, "you have been trying to show

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me that my mother and father are displaying real kindness and the right kind of watchful care by their requirements, of which I have just been complaining. But honestly, auntie, don't you think they ought to trust me a little? I'm older than Bobbie Brown."

"Yes, dear," I returned gently, "I think they ought to trust you, and I know they do, for they both love you very tenderly, but they do not think it is wise or necessary, or even safe, for you to be exposed to conditions which may arise through no fault of your own. I am glad if I have helped you to see that their attitude is one of real kindness for which you will thank them some day."

"I think I see what you mean," Anna returned thoughtfully, "and I am going to stop acting like Bobbie Brown (my, how he screeches), and stop sulking and fussing and thinking I am abused when I can not have my own way. Perhaps dad and mother know best."

"No 'perhaps' about it," I laughed. "Of course they do!"



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